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Local Headlines:

Local law enforcement gets funding for new radios

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Havre police officers and Hill County sheriff's deputies will soon be using new Motorola radios - models that will be useable when a project to streamline law enforcement and emergency services communications goes online next year.

The Local Emergency Planning Committee recently approved the use of about \$120,000 in federal Homeland Security funds distributed by the state to order new radios for local peace officers, Hill County Undersheriff Don Brostrom said Thursday.

Brostrom said the sheriff's office will receive 10 mobile radios for vehicles and four hand-held units for deputies.

Havre Police Chief Mike Barthel said his department has ordered eight mobiles and seven hand-held radios.

At a cost of \$5,000 for a mobile unit and \$3,500 each for hand-held radios, each department will get about \$60,000 worth of new equipment, Brostrom said.

The new radios will be capable of digital communication and will be compatible with the Northern Tier Interoperability Project, Brostrom said. The initiative, one of 11 statewide, will create a shared digital network for communications among law enforcement and emergency service personnel.

The radios will meet new federal standards for bandwidth, Brostrom added.

At the Police Department, new hand-held radios will reduce maintenance costs associated with the older units, Barthel said.

The purchase will cover all of the sheriff's office's needs for vehicle units, Brostrom said. Other funding must be found to purchase another half-dozen hand-held units, he said. Brostrom and Sheriff Greg Szudera will personally go without the new hand-held units for the time being in order to put the radios in the hands of deputies, he added.

Police Lt. Russ Ostwalt said today the department will need to purchase additional radios to bring all Havre officers up to the new standard.

The Nothern Tier project is progressing through the final planning stages, Brostrom said.

"Now it's getting down to the nuts and bolts of doing things," he said.

He hopes to have Northern Tier equipment installed by the end of the year and start testing the system early next year. Full startup should take place in March or April 2007, Brostrom said.

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